

OLD CASS COUNTY COURT HOUSE
BEARDSTOWN ILLINOIS

H.A.B.S. NO. ILL-284

HABS

ILL.

9- BEATO

3.

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
DISTRICT NO. ILL-2.

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
•EDGAR E. LUNDEEN-DISTRICT OFFICER•
CORN BELT BANK BUILDING-BLOOMINGTON, ILL.

OLD CASS COUNTY COURT HOUSE
(Now City Hall)
Beardstown, Cass County, Illinois

Owner. City of Beardstown.

Date of Erection. 1844.

Architect. None.

Builder. B. W. Schneider.

Present Condition. The building exists very much as originally constructed, except that floods have forced the removal of the original wood first floor and wainscot, which have been replaced. The floor is now concrete. The existing oak lintels and sills have been covered with sheet metal.

Number of Stories. Two.

Materials of Construction. The foundation is stone with a solid brick masonry superstructure. The two interior walls on either side of the hall are brick, while all cross walls are wood studs. All interior walls and ceilings are plastered and covered with modern sheet metal. The second floor construction is wood joist with yellow pine wood floor.

The roof is supported by heavy oak timbers in skeleton form, with $2\frac{1}{4}$ " x $4\frac{1}{2}$ " oak rafters, 2'-0" on centers, oak sheathing, and covered with a standing seam tin roof.

Other Existing Records. History of Cass County. Vol. II.
Bateman & Selby. 1915. P. 670.

Additional Data. There was much controversy regarding the location of the county seat. Beardstown was first chosen,

but failed to meet requirements, so the county seat was moved to Virginia. An act of the legislature granting a vote upon the question of removal of the county seat from Virginia in 1842, provided that if removed by vote, then the locality to which it was to be removed should provide a suitable court and jail without expense to the county. Beardstown agreed to the proposition, and guaranteed the buildings before the vote was taken. The trustees contracted with B. W. Schneider to build the court house, and with Thomas Beard, the founder of Beardstown, to build a jail. Both were erected on lot 1 of block 31.

The court house was built on the north end and corner of the lot, and the jail on the rear end, with twenty feet between them. The old jail is now the city jail and the fire station occupies the space between. The court house is now the city hall and the famous court room is now the council chamber. This court room is maintained as nearly as possible as it was in the days of Lincoln.

This building became famous due to the case entitled "The People vs. William Armstrong", and known in history as the famous "Duff Armstrong Trial." The notoriety was occasioned solely by the fact that Abraham Lincoln appeared for the defendant, and succeeded in clearing his client of the murder charge. More or less extended mention of the case is made in every published life of Mr. Lincoln.

References: History of Cass County. Bateman & Selby.

Vol. II. 1915.

References, cont. Transactions of the Illinois State
Historical Society. Pub. #23.

9-18-1910

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Loren Van Keyser

(Approved)

Wm. E. Lunden

District Officer

ADDENDUM
FOR LIPS...

JTW

7/26/27

An addendum to:
Cass County Courthouse, Old
Beardstown
Cass County
Illinois

HABS No. IL-284

HABS
ILL,
9-BEATO,
3-

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Addendum to CASS COUNTY COURTHOUSE

HABS No. IL-284

Location: Beardstown, Cass County, Illinois

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The following information was recorded by Alexander Piaget and Charles van Ravenswaay at the time the photograph was taken:

Built 1845. Building served as Cass County Courthouse during period that Beardstown was the county seat. Scene of the famous "Duff" Armstrong trial in which Armstrong was defended by Lincoln (1858). Building now used as City Hall.

PROJECT INFORMATION

The Piaget-van Ravenswaay Survey consists of a number of photographs, primarily of sites and structures in Missouri, which were taken before 1938 by Alexander Piaget and after that by Paul Piaget, both in conjunction with Charles van Ravenswaay. Photographs of buildings were incorporated into the HABS collection in 1985 by Laura Rupp and in 1986 by Deborah Fulton, HABS historians. A master list is available in the field records for MO-1800.